



# TREE TOPICS

A Newsletter From Your Friends At Arborological Services, Inc.

Vol. 12 • Issue 1

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FEBRUARY 2006

## COMPANY NEWS

### THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Arborological Services is a professional organization dedicated to fostering a general appreciation for the benefits of trees and their proper care. Efforts to educate others stems from the original company philosophies which were defined over **25 years ago!** Our approach is based on research, technology, and current industry standards; and it integrates the knowledge and experience of our staff. The current philosophies are mostly unchanged and reflect the values we hold dear. They are philosophies that directly guide our staff and set the level of service we provide.

A good example of that influence is from a quote by Chris Brewer, Staff Arborist since August 2004. Mr. Brewer states, "After working on commissions for 29 years, being on a salary is a refreshing change. There is no pressure to sell work, and proposed work is only recommended for a tree's overall health and well-being."

Our arborists have never worked on commission and the tree care recommendations they provide clients are not driven by monetary incentive. We are proud that all our tree care recommendations are geared toward tree health—nothing more. Our arborists are specialists in the care of individual trees; and, they can determine the type of pruning necessary to maintain or improve the health, appearance, and safety of trees. We view ourselves as educators rather than salespeople. We provide straightforward answers based on company and industry standards, and scientific research.

We firmly contend that the greatest value we can provide our clients is a staff that cares about our clients and the proper care of trees. This sets the stage for arborists with positive attitudes that seek client satisfaction.

Steve Houser  
*President*

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### TWO ADDITIONAL ARBORISTS JOIN THE ARBORIOLOGICAL SERVICES STAFF

We are proud to announce the addition of Chris Brewer and Ben Thomas to the staff of Arborists at Arborological Services. Their addition broadens the experience and knowledge base we provide for our clients.

Mr. Brewer, an I.S.A. Certified Arborist, brings with him extensive tree care experience from Virginia and Florida where he has been active in all aspects of tree maintenance. Chris has quickly become well versed with the challenges of caring for trees in north central Texas. When not meeting with clients and caring for trees, you are likely to find Chris on one of the area lakes with rod, reel, and tackle box in hand.

Ben Thomas comes to us from the Landscape Management Department of Creighton University, where he was

extensively involved in the development of a campus arboretum and the care of the university's trees. Ben is a graduate of Iowa State University with Bachelor of Science degree in Urban and Community Forestry. He also holds an Associate of Science degree in Environmental Studies from Iowa Lake Community College.

Ben is an active volunteer, having served on numerous community and non-profit organization committees, including the Boy Scouts of America. While active in scouting, he earned the rank of Eagle Scout.

We welcome Chris Brewer and Ben Thomas to the Metroplex and look forward to seeing our clients benefit from the knowledge and skills they bring to Arborological Services.

## YOUR LEADERS AT ARBOROLOGICAL SERVICES

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Licensed Applicator
- Keith Moody** —  
Chief Mechanic



## NICOLAS MARTINEZ TAKES 2005 STATE TREE CLIMBING CHAMPIONSHIP

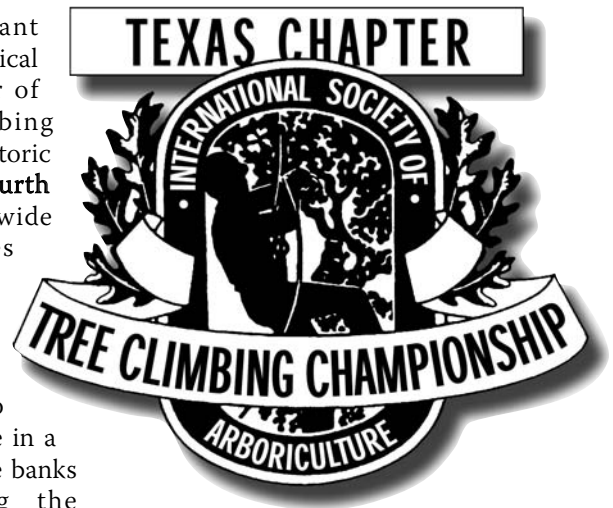
by Kevin Bassett

Nicolas Martinez, Assistant Production Manager at Arborological Services, Inc., was the winner of the 2005 Texas Tree Climbing Championship held in Austin's historic Zilker Park. This makes the fourth time Nicolas has won the statewide event! Arborological Services employees Leoncio Carlos and last year's State Champion, Miguel Pastenes finished second and fourth, respectively. The Master's Challenge, an event to determine a champion, took place in a towering Bald Cypress tree on the banks of Town Lake, overlooking the downtown Austin skyline.

As the State Champion, Nicolas earned the opportunity to represent the Texas Chapter in the International Society of Arboriculture's worldwide competition held in Nashville, Tennessee. Nicolas was well supported by a contingency of co-workers who traveled to Nashville to witness the competition firsthand and learn new techniques.

Nicolas narrowly missed a second place finish in the Throw Line event when he chose to remove a throw that had scored from a target area, in an attempt to re-throw and win the event. Unfortunately, his attempt failed when the time limit expired. Nicolas's competitive nature is to be applauded, as his decision to proceed was an all-or-nothing position and a second place finish would not have been acceptable when an opportunity to win existed.

Nicolas scored well in all events but was unable to make the finals where five of the world's best climbers competed. Dan Krauss of Seattle, Washington won the International Competition. His nearly flawless climb narrowly defeated five-time International Champion, Berend Strasser of Germany. Kevin Bassett of Arborological Services and Guy LeBlanc of Arbor Vitae Tree Care in Austin served as Head Judges in the Foot Lock and Aerial Rescue events, respectively. Texas tree climbers were well represented by both Kevin and Guy and their participation was highly valued



by the International Tree Climbing Championship.

The 2006 Texas Tree Climbing Championship will return to Waco's Texas Ranger Museum with dates yet to be announced. The International Competition will be in Minneapolis, Minnesota in August. The climbers at Arborological Services will be pushed to their limits, as a number of climbers in the state have demonstrated the skills to win. The dominance that Arborological Services employees have enjoyed at this event is phenomenal considering the competition. Since 1990, six different Arborological Services employees have won the Texas Championship—thirteen times. Our Production Crews are comprised of climbers who are considered among the tree care industry's best. Their skills are evident on a daily basis as they take on the challenges of caring for our clients' trees.

The Texas Tree Climbing Championship is where the state's best tree climbers compete for the opportunity to win the "Houser Cup" (named in honor of our company president, Steve Houser), and represent Texas at the International Tree Climbing Championship. Official results for the ITCC are available online at [www.isa-arbor.com](http://www.isa-arbor.com). Click on "Welcome", "Media Source", "International Tree Climbing Championship", "Competition Results", and the 2005 results and articles will be available to you.

## WHEN IS IT SAFE TO PRUNE OAKS?

by Russell Peters, Plant Pathologist, Consulting Arborist

Our clients often hear different, confusing, or contradictory statements regarding the risks related to the pruning of Oak trees during the spring. Today's wealth of information venues often contributes to the confusion. Why are there concerns about risks associated with pruning Oak trees in the spring? Let's examine two facts and work toward a simple conclusion that should be helpful.

- *The physical act of properly pruning an Oak tree in the spring has no negative effect, physiologically or otherwise, on the overall health and vigor of an Oak tree.*
- *A tree, Oak or otherwise, is more susceptible to invasion by pests and diseases during the spring flush or reproductive cycle.*

At anytime of the year, with a conservative approach to pruning and specific objectives applied, there is no negative effect on a tree's overall health and vigor to any species of tree. However, over-pruning, the removal of excessive amounts of foliage (greater than 20%) at anytime of the year, will cause a decrease in a tree's ability to carry on its life-long mission of photosynthesis. The simple reduction in photosynthetic leaf area results in a decrease of available energy for the many activities a tree must execute. This includes defense against invasion by damaging organisms.

Flowering, and the production of new foliage require an enormous amount of energy. The fluctuation in a tree's year-round energy reserves is lowest immediately after the completion of its reproductive cycle. Thus, the amount of energy available to use for defense against invasion by pathogens is at its lowest point. Once the expansion of new leaves occurs, the ability of a tree to carry on photosynthesis begins for the upcoming season.

Why are we cautioned to "avoid" wounding or pruning Oak species in the spring? The reasons you hear this warning are: 1) the tree's energy levels are low, as previously explained; and 2) a major vascular pathogen, the Oak Wilt

fungus, has the ability to initiate a portion of its reproductive cycle in the spring and the pathogen can be carried from tree to tree by a specific sap-feeding beetle.

These insects are attracted to fresh wounds of any tree species. They like the smell of new wounds on trees as well as the smell of the Oak Wilt fungus reproductive structure. The wounds created by pruning at anytime of the year are just as attractive, but the number of sap-feeding beetles diminish dramatically AND the ability of the fungus to initiate its reproductive cycle ceases as temperatures rise.

The Arborists and Staff at Arborilogical Services, along with Dr.

David Appel at Texas A&M University, have attempted to properly provide the public with a consistent pruning avoidance period applicable throughout Texas. It is a tall order often defeated by misinformation that still occurs to this day. Case in point: The recent issue of a suburban city's neighborhood newsletter includes an article that states the pruning avoidance period as "February through September". This is incorrect and only makes the issue more confusing. We have contacted the city and they will issue a correction statement.

So, when is the time to avoid pruning or wounding Oak trees?

*continued on page 4*

## INSECT PEST OF WESTERN SOAPBERRY REPORTED FROM THE DALLAS AREA

by Dr. Michael Merchant

A new pest to north Texas, the wood-boring beetle *Agrilus prionurus*, was discovered this summer damaging Western Soapberry trees in the Dallas/Fort Worth area. The beetle, a native of Mexico, was first discovered in the U.S. attacking native Western Soapberry trees in Bastrop County, Texas in October 2003. It has since been found in numerous sites in the Texas hill country and other parts of south and central Texas. It probably arrived in north Texas within the last two years.

Entomologists at the Texas A&M Dallas Research and Extension Center first confirmed the "Soapberry borer" this summer. It has since been seen by others, at various other sites in the Metroplex. Infested trees can be identified by probing the bark to see if it easily peels off. Another infestation sign appears when small patches of bark 1.5 to 3 inches or larger in diameter are peeled off by squirrels looking for insect larvae. A heavily infested tree will be completely girdled by the feeding in the sensitive cambium layer just under the bark.

The adult beetle is about one half inch long, shining black and distinctively marked with four small white spots. It is narrowly cylindrical

with tapering wing covers that merge to a point.

The beetle has been highly damaging to Soapberry in central Texas. According to Arborist Pat Wentworth of Austin Tree Specialists, Soapberry damage was first noticed about three years ago. Although it has not completely eliminated the tree there, the beetles have caused extensive losses of healthy, mature stands of Soapberry. So far the beetle appears to be limited to attacking only Western Soapberry, a native tree that occurs in scattered plantings along creeks, and is occasionally used in native landscapes. The beetle should pose no risk to other landscape trees.

No research has yet been done on control of this pest, but conventional borer preventive sprays may help. If you believe your tree may already be under attack, a root zone application of imidacloprid (Bayer Advanced Tree And Shrub Insect Control) has been effective in the upper Midwest against similar tree borers.

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*Article reproduced by permission of the author, Dr. Michael Merchant, Professor and Extension Entomologist, Texas A&M University Research and Extension Center, Dallas.*

## Arborilogical Services, Inc.

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### DID YOU KNOW . . .

- ▶ Willows and Cottonwoods belong in the same plant family, Salicaceae.
- ▶ Corkwood, *Leitneria floridana*, is a small thicket-forming shrub native to Southeast Texas. Corkwood is the only member of its family and is the only native tree in North America with its own family. The wood of this tree is unique because it is so light. A cubic foot of wood only weighs 13 pounds. It is used in certain floating devices and bottle stoppers.
- ▶ Colonists referred to Sweetbay, *Magnolia virginiana*, as "Beaver Tree". Beaver traps were baited with fleshy roots from this tree.
- ▶ Mountain Laurel, *Kalmia latifolia*, is a beautiful flowering shrub in the eastern half of the United States. It is said that the honey made from the flowers of this tree is poisonous. The foliage is poisonous to livestock if browsed. This is not the same plant as the Texas Mountain Laurel, *Sophora secundiflora*, which we grow in our landscapes. However, the seeds of the Texas Mountain Laurel are poisonous.

### WHEN IS IT SAFE TO PRUNE OAKS? *continued from page 3*

***Ok, here it is: Spring! However, pruning Oaks during this time IS safe if the wounds two inches in diameter and larger have a thin coat of wound dressing applied to them as the cuts are made.***

We define spring as the time when trees become active—after winter dormancy, and during flowering and re-leaving. This period can vary dramatically in north Texas. Depending on when temperatures rise steadily, the average time begins in mid-February. We see this happening when we enjoy the essence of spring. The avoidance period (or time to take extra precautions) ends when temperatures consistently rise

to 90 degrees and above, which usually corresponds with the end of May. See how confusing this explanation becomes! Our conclusion to defining when the two events occur can be more simply described by stating the period of time as Valentine's Day, February 14th, through Memorial Day, the last days of May.

Hopefully, this resolves some of the confusion surrounding the pruning of Oaks. Please feel free to contact your Arborist via email or phone, Dallas 972-442-1524 or Ft. Worth 817-849-1160; and he or she will be glad to further discuss the matter and answer any additional questions you might have.

### NEIL SPERRY'S HAND-TURNED PENS AVAILABLE

We would like to inform you of the extraordinary handmade pens from the workshop of Neil Sperry. We bring them to your attention for two reasons. First, the pens are beautifully handcrafted from exotic and historic trees. And second, all proceeds from their sales benefit the McKinney Education Foundation in support of Serenity High, the only public recovery high school in the United States. For more information please call Patti Karamas at 972-562-5050, or by email at [patti@sperrygardens.com](mailto:patti@sperrygardens.com).

